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ABSTRACT

Crisis management in the schools is discussed in this position paper. These topics are addressed: the origins of crisis intervention in the schools; the effectiveness of the crisis team approach; establishment of the crisis team; primary components of existing crisis intervention plans; and the role of the school counselor in crisis intervention. Based on a literature review and personal experience the following recommendations are made: (1) more research is needed to determine which crisis intervention procedures are effective; (2) the crisis management plan should be applicable to a variety of tragic incidents; (3) the crisis plan should have responsibilities designated to specific people so that it can be executed without delay; (4) documentation and recordkeeping forms need to be developed and published; (5) schools must train and utilize their staffs more effectively; (6) peer counselors should not lead group discussions during the aftermath of a crisis; (7) suggested methods of notifying people about the tragedy need to be improved or revised; (8) every school building should have a trained spokesperson; (9) the media should be denied access to the school building during a crisis; (10) school districts could easily be better prepared for dealing with emergency or violent situations; (11) evaluation procedures and accompanying forms need to be developed; and (12) all school counselors should participate in assisting students during a crisis. (ABL)

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CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Submitted by

Susan M. Everett

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Master of Education

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

March, 1991

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

> The bus carrying the girls' basketball team home from a game has met with a serious accident. Or tomorrow, a high school student could commit suicide, or arsonists could torch the central office, or a sniper could loose a volley of shots on a crowded playground (Kelly, Stimeling, & Kachur, 1989, p. 22).

Most schools, if they haven't been already, will be faced with a tragedy that interferes with its ordinary operation and considerably disrupts the ability of staff and students to concentrate on education. (Jay, 1989). During the 1980s, the number of student problems that have affected schools has increased dramatically. Statistics have confirmed this disturbing statement:

- Currently, over 9,000 teens are killed yearly in motor vehicle accidents. Accidents are, in fact, the leading cause of death among teens (cited in Vidal, 1989).
- The American Association of Suicidology [reported that] suicide is now the second leading cause of death for youths in the 15-to-24 age range (cited in Nation, 1988).
- Each year about a dozen natural disasters of major proportion and as many as 40 of smaller magnitude occur. These disasters . . . result in destruction of life and property (Crabbs, 1981, p. 165).
- To the traditional calamities that have on occasion beset schools - fires, floods, blizzards, airplane crashes, earthquakes, tornados, and the like - we must now add such modern developments as chemical spills, bomb threats, sniper attacks, AIDS, hostage situations, and terrorism (Nation, 1988, p. 3).
- Three million crimes are committed on school grounds each year, with 183,590 people injured in 1987, according to the National Crime Survey (cited in Harper, 1989).

- Every 36 minutes, a child is killed or injured by guns. Every day, 135,000 children bring guns to school (Edelman as cited in Machacek, 1990).

The tremendous increase in the number of student problems has spawned several controversial issues for school systems (Palmo, Langlois, & Bender, 1988; Serafin, 1990). In 1989, Weinberg observed that "the prospect of providing postcrisis counseling to emotionally aroused and potentially suicidal students can be intimidating and may provoke resistance in the school community and district" (p. 305). Weinberg revealed some of the common misgivings associated with the involvement of schools in crisis intervention. There were concerns that school personnel were already over-extended in the number of duties they were being asked to perform and this would just increase the workload.. He reported that schools were not experienced in dealing with tragedy and were concerned with possible liability problems. Weinberg also noted that many school counselors were either not comfortable or competent in working with students in crisis.

Whether school personnel like it or not, the public presumes that they will help during catastrophic situations because schools are viewed as places of support for troubled communities (Crabbs, 1981). Hunt (1987) rationalized that because the local media usually identifies young victims by the school they attend, the public trusts that the school will offer to assist with the incident. The community's expectation that schools become involved in crisis intervention also stems from the fact that " teachers, counselors, and administrators are finding themselves in the role of surrogate mothers and fathers. Schools are being asked to complete the tasks that others are unwilling or unable to perform" (Vidal, 1989, p. 11).

Nation (1988) also acknowledged that there was disagreement as to whether schools should intervene in the life and death situations involving students. She concluded, however, that most likely, school districts had no choice. Because a serious tragedy will certainly interfere with the normal operation of school, because learning cannot continue when students and staff are distracted by the situation, and because the community assumes it is the school's responsibility to assist in a crisis; it seemed, indeed, that schools had no alternative but to become involved.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

> Schools and businesses alike have found that mismanagement of a crisis can cause more lasting harm to the organization than the crisis itself (Jay, 1989, p. 14).

It is inevitable that most school districts will have to deal with tragedy. The way in which that tragedy is handled will reflect upon the school's reputation within the community and affect the well-being of its students and staff. Because of this fact, this position paper will address these questions:

1. **What are the origins of crisis intervention in the schools?**
2. **How effective is the crisis team approach?**
3. **How should the crisis team be established?**
4. **What are the primary components found in existing crisis intervention plans?**
5. **What is the school counselor's role in crisis intervention?**

Definition of Terms

> *Crisis* shall be defined as "an intolerable situation, unstable condition, or sudden change that disrupts the normal operation of [school] and demands immediate attention and resolution" (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988, p. 1).

Crises might include natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and tornados or environmental disasters such as chemical spills and plant explosions. Circumstances such as hostage situations, student and staff suicides, homicides, fatal accidents, armed intruders, serious illnesses or

accidents could also affect the functioning of school. Situations such as physical or sexual abuse, drug addiction, pregnancy, and family difficulties are usually dealt with on an individual basis and generally do not affect a large sector of the school population. This definition was not intended to discount these types of problems faced by children, but was used to restrict the focus of this paper.

Crisis Intervention is defined as the identification of "immediate needs . . . [that] must be addressed to resolve the situation. These needs . . . include physical welfare, emotional stability, security, and protection of personal and institutional integrity" (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988, p. 1).

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Search Process for Literature

The literature search was mainly conducted in Morgan Library which is located on the main campus of Colorado State University. The guidance department at Boltz Junior High School in Fort Collins, CO, also supplied materials relevant to this paper.

Primary and secondary sources were obtained through the library's computerized catalog system (CAM), the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsycLIT, Infotrac for general periodicals, and the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries (CARL). A list of bibliographies was acquired by completing a subject search on CAM using the terms "crisis intervention" and "crisis management." References were also gathered by conducting a proximity search on ERIC using the descriptor "crisis intervention" and then modifying those records with the descriptor "school." The Additional Search Options available on ERIC were also used to scan for the phrases "crisis team" or "crisis response team." The PsychLIT system delivered possible sources using the descriptor of "crisis team." To search through the periodicals, Infotrac required the phrases "crisis intervention" and "student counselors." Once materials were located, the bibliographies found at the end of the literature provided additional sources of reference. CARL and the other systems previously mentioned were used to find these additional sources.

The Origins of Crisis Intervention in the Schools

> Tragic deaths, natural disasters, and violent assaults among other situations can have a devastating impact on students, teachers, parents, and other members of the school community (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988, p. 1).

Schools cannot be expected to function normally during or immediately following a tragedy. "A person experiencing a crisis may show marked emotionality and greatly reduced cognitive functioning in the areas of memory, concentration, articulation of thoughts, organization and planning ability, and other areas important for school learning" (Sandoval, 1988, p. 26). Because students and staff are disturbed by the situation, their needs must be addressed before a school can expect a return to pre-crisis operations. This point was emphasized by the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, in 1988, when they reviewed this episode:

> In one large high school of nearly 5,000 students, which did not have a crisis plan, a popular 10th-grade student committed suicide on a Wednesday. The staff began organizing to deal with it on Thursday. On Friday the area was hit by a hurricane and school was closed. Monday came, and the school officials assumed that, because things were quiet, the crisis was behind them. But on Wednesday a second student, the closest friend of the first suicide victim, took his life. The student body erupted with expressions of anger and outrage, which school officials were unable to contain. With a crisis plan in place, much of the turmoil in this high school might have been avoided (p. 13).

During the aftermath of a tragic life event, special assistance is needed for school-age victims to assess and cope with the situation (Crabbs, 1981). School districts should not sidestep their obligation to help children in crisis by claiming that it is a parent responsibility because the personal, academic, and social growth of students was impeded when their emotional problems were not addressed. Because of this, Palmo et al. (1988) maintained that school districts should investigate why it is warranted that they become involved.

The basic features inherent in most schools provided a favorable setting for executing crisis interventions (Vidal, 1989). Relationships between adults and children have already been established and these friendships can be an advantage in assisting students during a crisis. Clark (as cited in Harper, 1989) observed that because school staff members already knew the youngsters, they could

carefully monitor how students are coping with the tragedy, identify those individuals who seemed to need help, and refer them for counseling. In addition, the structured atmosphere of school reassured students that there are people in charge who are concerned for their welfare, and offered a familiar sense of order during an unsettled time (Lowe, 1987).

Due to the increase in tragic events affecting schools, it might be assumed that most districts would have instituted plans for dealing with these situations. This has not been the case. Palmo et al. (1988) surveyed 15 schools in Pennsylvania and found that none of them had policies and procedures for dealing with a crisis. More recently, the Colorado Department of Education asserted that many systems are not prepared to handle the tragic situations affecting schools (Serafin, 1990).

Why have school districts avoided putting together crisis management plans? "Perhaps it is human nature to act only after a crisis occurs. Most people wait until their homes are burglarized before making the decision to install deadbolts on their doors and security devices on their windows. Schools are sometimes affected by the same logic. Sometimes they wait too long to act" (Vidal, 1989, p. 7).

Many of the schools that currently have crisis management plans in place waited too long. Their plans were established in reaction to tragic events that had previously occurred. Hunt (1987) reported that in response to the increasing number of suicides and attempted suicides throughout her district, the superintendent formed a committee to examine how their schools could better deal with crisis. Besides the Grosse Point, MI school system cited by Hunt, authors from districts in Cokeville, WY (Lowe, 1987), Weld County, CO (Ruof, Harris & Robbie, 1987), and Golden, CO (Vidal, 1989) shared that their districts had implemented crisis management plans as a result of tragedies which had happened in their schools.

The legal implications involved with such volatile situations is a second factor that has spurred school systems to formulate crisis intervention plans. Harper (1989) contended that the physical safety of students and staff at school is a valid legal issue. She claimed that schools have a greater likelihood of falling prey to disturbed individuals who may have negative emotions associated with school or who know that incidents involving children will bring instant notoriety.

After reviewing several pertinent lawsuits, Harper concluded that districts may keep their schools from being found liable in court if they can provide evidence that "they exercised due diligence in preventing crime and violence on their campuses (p. 7). Serafin (1990) also acknowledged that "school officials or employees, according to legal consensus, are responsible to 'reasonably foresee' that injuries are prevented and conditions are corrected to protect students" (p. 3).

In his 1989 report, Vidal stated that schools not only have the duty of providing a safe environment, but must also be concerned with the way in which a crisis situation is managed:

> No legal term describes the role of schools more accurately than 'in loco parentis'. . . . meaning 'in place of the parent'. . . . Consequently, educators are obligated to perform as would 'reasonably prudent persons under the same or similar circumstances'. Educators, however, hold a responsibility that has higher standards of care than those of an average person. . . . This responsibility carries a vast burden for administrators, counselors, teachers, and other staff under threat of liability. . . . Some argue that school counselors may be held to a different standard of care than classroom teachers because of their training and certification requirements. The same may hold true for principals (p. 12).

Slenkovich (1986) determined that school districts have a legal obligation to maintain a staff which is competent in dealing with emergency situations. She cited the court case involving Brian Kelson, a 14-year-old who brought a gun to school, robbed a teacher, and eventually committed suicide. Details of the incident revealed "an incredible lack of common sense on the part of the school's personnel" (p. 1). After her examination of the Kelson v. The City of Springfield decision, she reported that "the court said a lawsuit may be maintained when there is no **intentional killing** but the death can be arguably traced to the **inadequate training** of the government employees" (p. 3).

Jay (1989) insisted that competent legal counsel is an important factor when researching and forming district policies for handling a crisis. She suggested that schools consider issues of confidentiality, possible damages incurred, who might be held liable, the employees, the district, the school board and which legal precedents might assist in assembling a plan.

It appeared that the implementation of crisis management plans resulted from the increasing number of tragic situations infiltrating schools. Educators realized that a crisis demanded some type of intervention within the school setting because the public insisted on it and because the normal operation of school was certain to be affected. Students and staff could not be expected to focus on

learning until some of the anxiety resulting from the tragedy had subsided. Schools provided a desirable environment where children can be monitored by adults and they can receive help in coping with the incident.

Legal concerns have also compelled schools to adopt crisis intervention procedures. School systems are responsible for providing a safe atmosphere for children and are obligated to correct any situation that might cause harm to a student (Harper, 1989; Serafin, 1990). Districts are also charged with maintaining a competently trained staff to deal with emergencies or risk being found liable if serious mistakes are made (Slenkovich, 1986; Vidal, 1989).

Pre-crisis planning would reduce the probability that poor or rash decisions are made at the worst possible time (Collison et al., 1987). "Planning could also go a long way toward protecting a school from liability" argued education lawyer, George Margolies (cited in Jennings, 1989, p. 27). Despite this logic, many school systems still have not established a crisis management plan (Palmo et al., 1988). Considering the evidence presented, this seemed to be a dangerous choice. All the literature consulted for this paper agreed that a school should have a crisis management plan in place before a tragedy happened. "We can't emphasize strongly enough the importance of developing a crisis plan before a catastrophe occurs" (Kelly et al., 1989, p. 23).

The Crisis Response Team

Justification of the Crisis Team Approach

> Schools should develop their own school counseling programs to suit their own unique circumstances (Hargens, 1987, p. 13).

When a crisis plan is developed, each school system, indeed, each school building has the responsibility to consider such factors as student population, staff expertise, community resources, and types of possible tragedies. It is only when the plan is customized for a specific school that it can be most effective. Vidal (1989) discussed some of the various approaches used throughout the country.

> . . . Some small schools have only one individual, usually a counselor, who has been assigned the duties of crisis manager. Other schools have crisis teams composed of teachers who have received special intervention training and who give up their planning periods to serve as crisis managers. Some school districts have a central administration intervention team that travels from one school to the next during a school crisis. Others include strong peer counselors as part of their intervention teams. There are also schools that rely on crisis teams consisting of local mental health professionals. Some use a combination of all the above methods. In any case, local needs and available resources generally rule the approach used by a school building. (p. 19)

Vidal continued his comparison by observing that "although many of these approaches have been successful, the in-house crisis team is a more tenable plan" (1989, p. 19). Serafin (1990) was even more emphatic when she stated that "one of the most effective tactics a school/community can employ in a 'crisis' is to have a Response Team in place" (p. 6).

This seemed to be the common opinion among the authors concerned with crisis management in schools (e.g. Fink, 1986; Jay, 1989; Kelly et al., 1989; Nation, 1988; North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988). There were 22 references consulted for this paper that made specific recommendations for handling school-wide tragedies. Nineteen out of those 22 endorsed the crisis team approach.

These authors provided a variety of rationales for using response teams in schools. Kelly et al. (1989, p. 22) advocated the team approach because "no one person can meet all the demands of a full-blown crisis. . . . You need a small group of people who have the knowledge and skills to act as troubleshooters and consultants." Ruof et al. (1987) offered several reasons for utilizing a crisis team. Some were: (a) the number of students requiring assistance was more than one person could effectively deal with, (b) the students were more comfortable sharing their feelings with a staff member they already knew, rather than someone with whom they were unfamiliar; (c) a plan which incorporated trained personnel is superior to one that is simply reactive in nature. Finally, Vidal (1989) noted that a team might be able to respond more quickly than some of the other options.

Possible Members of the Crisis Response Team

There was a large group of individuals for consideration as team members (Serafin, 1990; Vidal, 1989). Again, local needs and resources mandated the make-up of the crisis team.

Several authors suggested certain personal characteristics that might indicate whether a person would be a desirable team member. Kelly et al. (1989) recommended choosing the most responsible, level-headed people available. They advised against selecting individuals on the basis of friendships or politics. School personnel who had developed a good rapport with students were also considered as prime candidates (Ruof et al, 1987). Sorensen (1989) observed that valuable team members would possess strong clinical skills, understand how the school building operates, and be familiar with crisis intervention techniques.

Fink (1986) and Nation (1988) recommended that there be a "central core" to each crisis management team. It was imperative that the core team be limited to those individuals who were free to act immediately (Rouf et al., 1987; Vidal, 1989). In addition, a variety of other members would

be named and utilized at the discretion of the "central core." It was noted that the type of tragedy being dealt with would require that different team members be called in for assistance.

The response team should include representatives from three primary sectors (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Serafin, 1990). The authors cited: (a) central administration, (b) individual schools, and (c) community support resources as necessary components of an integrated, effective team.

Individuals who might be participants from the central administration level are the Director of Special Services, the Director of Counseling, the Director of Psychology/Social Work, the Substance Abuse Coordinator, or the At Risk Coordinator (Serafin, 1990). In addition, Kelly et al. (1989), recommended the involvement of school board members and the school district's attorney. It was suggested that the superintendent, or someone designated by the superintendent serve as a team member (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988). Harper (1989) noted that because it may be necessary to evacuate a school, the transportation department must also be involved.

At the individual school level, the team was usually led by the principal, with a designated replacement in the event the principal was not available. Individuals such as coaches, guidance counselors, the school nurse, a school secretary, and the head custodian were also suggested (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988). Serafin (1990) added the school psychologist or social worker, teachers, and a student advisor. A translator was considered essential if the school population was comprised of a large number of non-English speaking students (Nation, 1988).

A wide range of possibilities existed for crisis team members from the community. Vidal (1989) stated that parent involvement was critical. He also listed mental health organizations, therapists, law enforcement agencies, social services, medical professionals, churches, youth organizations, feeder schools, and the local media as other valuable sources for recruiting team members. The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (1988) echoed Vidal's recommendations and also included lawyers, judges, and emergency services such as ambulance, fire department, and the hospital emergency ward. Representatives from local help lines, Alcoholics Anonymous, battered women programs, and juvenile justice programs might also be valuable in certain situations.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (1988) provided a list of resources that can be found in most communities (see Appendix A).

There was a large pool of individuals to draw from when forming the crisis team. It was suggested that a core group be established and that the others remain "on call" to assist depending upon the nature and the extent of the tragedy (Fink, 1986; Nation, 1988). The core group should include representatives from these three sectors - central administration, individual schools, and the community. It was emphasized that a variety of sources be utilized during the development and implementation stages, but that the core group eventually be limited to people who are available for the duration of a crisis.

Responsibilities of the Crisis Response Team

Once the crisis team is established, they have a duty to perform certain functions. It should be clarified that depending on the size of the district and the type of crisis intervention approach adopted, some of these responsibilities may be carried out at each school and others at the district level. Vidal (1989) divided these duties into four general categories, which seemed to encompass and organize the other authors' opinions concerning the role of the crisis team.

1) Development and Implementation of the Crisis Intervention Plan

"The development of a comprehensive intervention plan requires much time. It is, however, the most critical activity of the crisis team" (Vidal, 1989, p. 18). Most authors maintained that the primary function of the team was to define what constitutes a crisis, develop policies and procedures for managing a crisis, and assign individuals to be accountable for certain tasks during a crisis (e.g. Hunt, 1987; Jay, 1989; Serafin, 1990).

2) Coordination with Community Resources

The community can often provide valuable resources for assisting schools in crisis. The crisis team was responsible for compiling a list of local services and investigating how they could interface with schools during a disaster. To perpetuate the partnership, schools periodically invited representatives from supporting community agencies to meet with the crisis team (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988). Vidal (1989) suggested that the community services' role in the crisis plan be updated every two years. He also commented that by engaging public support, a calamity will be seen as a community problem rather than a problem for the school to solve.

3) Education and Training

The references consulted for this paper generally assumed that the crisis team organized the training necessary for implementing and maintaining the crisis management plan (e.g. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Ruof et al, 1987; Serafin, 1990). This would include educating themselves, teachers, counselors, administrators, school support staff, students, parents, and the community. A more detailed discussion about this subject is included in the "Components of a Crisis Intervention Plan" section of this paper.

4) Program Maintenance

Several authors encouraged an annual evaluation and review of the crisis management plan (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988; Ruof et al., 1987; Serafin, 1990). It was also suggested that the team assess its effectiveness after every emergency (Jay, 1989; Kelly et al., 1989; Serafin, 1990).

It has been established that the crisis team approach is probably the desired method of managing a school catastrophe. Effective team members possessed certain personality characteristics and management skills. They would be enlisted from individual schools, central administration, and

the community. Crisis team members were primarily responsible for developing, implementing, and maintaining the crisis management plan.

Components of a Crisis Intervention Plan

Crisis management plans had several key elements. Before specific parts of existing plans are reviewed, some general guidelines will be presented.

General Guidelines

The crisis intervention plan should reflect the uniqueness of each school and school district. When a plan is being developed, other designs can be used to provide ideas and direction, but shouldn't be copied exactly and without consideration of local resources and needs (Osborne, 1985; Palmo et al., 1988; Serafin, 1990).

"A crisis plan has to be simple, concise, and flexible." This perhaps obvious, but excellent advice was offered by Kelly et al. (1989, p. 22) and was substantiated by several other authors. Jay (1989) and Fink (1986) observed that the plan should not be several hundred pages in length with detailed directions for every possible tragedy because no one has time to read such a document when faced with a crisis. Serafin (1990) provided a general outline of the tasks to be accomplished during a crisis intervention (see Appendix B).

The crisis management plan ought to be useful for a broad range of disasters and should not focus on any single type of tragedy, such as suicide (e.g. Collison et al., 1987; Fink, 1986; Harper, 1989; Jay, 1989; Kelly et al., 1989). It must be noted that several sources consulted for this paper had presented detailed plans which dealt only with student suicide (e.g. Hunt, 1986; Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Ruof et al., 1987; Vidal, 1989). Perhaps suicide is singled-

out because it is more common than some other types of tragedies, such as an armed intruder, and because there is the risk of copy-cat suicides compounding the problem. Several of these sources indicated that with modifications their plans would be useful in other situations involving the deaths of students or school personnel (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Vidal, 1989). There appeared to be almost an even split among the authors in either offering suicide-specific crisis plans or taking a more general approach.

The plan should specifically state who declares the situation a crisis, who activates the response team, and which individuals would be responsible for certain duties during the emergency (Harper, 1989; Palmo et al., 1988; Serafin, 1990; Vidal, 1989). This triggered a systematic deployment of the crisis management plan. Fink (1986) also strongly encouraged the naming of substitutes for key individuals so their duties would still be performed even if they were not available.

It was advised that the crisis team designate a record keeper to maintain a log of events that developed and actions that were taken during the outset and following the crisis (Nation, 1988; Palmo et al, 1988; Ruof et al, 1987). A record of all incoming/outgoing calls and any other personal contacts that were made should be included in the documentation (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988). Ruof et al. (1987) provided an "action plan" form that could be useful for documenting which person performed certain responsibilities (see Appendix C). A roster in the counseling office was used to record the names of students requesting help (Wall & Viers, 1985). After the crisis had subsided, appreciation should be extended to individuals who were helpful, courageous, or patient during the incident (Jay, 1989). A final report was prepared for the crisis team's file and submitted to central administration (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Vidal, 1989).

A communications center was designated to aid in the execution and management of the crisis plan. The crisis team gathered and disseminated information from this location and assigned people to manage the phones (e.g. Harper, 1989; Nation, 1988).

School should remain in session, or open as soon as possible during a crisis (Dempsy, 1986; Lowe, 1987). Clark (cited in Harper, 1989, p. 22) noted that by closing school "students are

left to their own devices at the precise time when they are most upset and overwhelmed by their feelings, and the opportunity for a rumor mill to greatly distort the actual events is inadvertently encouraged." Depending upon the nature of the disaster, getting school back in session as quickly as possible can reassure students and staff that the building can once again be considered a safe place and adult professionals can be provided to help those who are traumatized (Lowe, 1987).

Hunt (1986, 1987) observed that based on her district's experience it took approximately four days for school to return to a relatively normal status. In addition, it was suggested that the crisis team devise an appropriate signal to students and staff that the official mourning period is over and it is time to resume regular operations (Dempsey, 1986; Hunt, 1986; Kelly et al., 1989).

A crisis management plan will not automatically "fix" or ward-off a catastrophe. A crisis plan is a framework to help people make sensible decisions during a turbulent time. According to Fink (1986, p. 55) the main objective for instituting a crisis management plan is to make "certain key decisions on the *mechanical* portions of the crisis - those aspects that rarely vary - and [leave the crisis team] free to manage the *content* portion of the crisis." In general, the authors agreed that this could be accomplished by keeping the plan short, simple, and by delegating as many duties as possible in advance. There also seemed to be a consensus that the plan should include provisions for keeping school open because it can assist students and staff in dealing with the event. It was also recommended that some type of indicator be used to notify the school community that the time for grieving has passed and it is time to return to normal proceedings.

Training and Education

> Teachers, administrators, and counselors feel unprepared to deal effectively with such a tragedy. They seemed shocked and almost paralyzed. Most wanted someone else to handle the situation (Alexander & Harman, 1988, p. 285).

Education and training of the crisis response team, school personnel, students, and parents was considered vital for promoting competent crisis management. Most members of the educational staff were uncomfortable in dealing with catastrophic situations (Lord, 1990; Palmo et al., 1988; Weinberg, 1989). This apprehension felt by staff members may cause them to avoid the issue. They may contend that crisis intervention is not a school responsibility or that the discussion of certain topics, such as student suicide, will only aggravate the problem (Ruof et al., 1987). Weinberg (1989) made a rather interesting claim. He concluded that bringing in outside resources to assist schools in trauma, rather than training school staff to deal with it, discouraged them from trying to manage the crisis themselves and may actually contribute to their reluctance to become involved. Regardless of their reasons, Palmo et al. (1988), maintained that there will be staff members who will be tentative about participating but given adequate time, encouragement, and education, most will find a level of involvement that is fitting for them.

It was strongly recommended that all school personnel receive annual inservice instruction regarding the crisis management plan (Lord, 1990; Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988).

> When crises occur, they can be magnified or minimized depending how well the school staff follows appropriate policies and procedures. For that reason, the school system should have annual inservice about the policies and procedures that relate to various crisis situations. While not all crises can be averted, school systems can prevent them from being compounded due to carelessness, negligence, or lack of information (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988, p. 13).

Ruof et al. (1987) made the unique suggestion that training occur in small groups so that the presenter, presumably an expert in crisis intervention, can be aware of and sensitive to staff members' responses to such emotionally-charged issues. In addition to the inservice, schools were advised to

collect materials concerning crisis-related issues and make them available to staff, students, and parents (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Vidal, 1989).

It was generally assumed by most sources that members of the crisis team would receive enhanced crisis intervention training. Serafin (1990) was probably the most specific as to what this training might entail. Some of the topics she mentioned were: (a) an awareness of national and local statistics concerning the various incidents that could evolve into a school crisis, (b) the district's rationale for forming a crisis team and establishing a crisis management plan, (c) the duties of the crisis team members, (d) knowledge of the referral process being used, (e) an understanding of the grief process, (f) how to network with community services, (g) legal issues concerning liability and confidentiality, and (h) the methods used for review and evaluation. In addition, it was advised that designated crisis team members receive specialized training for dealing with the news media (Nation, 1988; Vidal, 1989). It was also suggested that the person in charge, usually the principal, be knowledgeable about procedures for summoning emergency services and for providing those people with the information they need to efficiently perform their job (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988).

Second only to the crisis team, teachers were the primary target for training. Palmo et al. (1988) remarked that "most teachers want to help, but often fail to become involved because they lack this training" (p. 100). It was recommended that a meeting be held at the beginning of each school year to introduce the crisis team, to review the teachers' role in the crisis management plan, and to distribute handouts that might encourage and assist teachers with the part they play in the crisis intervention process (Ruof et al., 1987). Serafin (1990) also recognized that it was important for teachers to understand their role and suggested that issues of confidentiality and information about the grief cycle also be included in the presentation. Lord (1990) approved of bringing in mental health professionals to assist teachers in learning some techniques for facilitating small groups because classroom discussions allowed students the opportunity to express their feelings about the tragedy.

It was strongly advised that staff and students practice emergency evacuation drills so that the building can be emptied in an organized manner (Harper, 1989; Lowe, 1987). Teachers should

be instructed to assemble their class at a specified campus location and to bring their attendance rosters with them so they can give an accurate accounting of students present. This idea was expanded upon by Fink (1986) and the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (1988) when they recommended that a mock crisis be enacted so that the staff could become familiar with the procedures outlined in the crisis manage plan.

Districts were encouraged to provide a special inservice for school secretaries (Harper, 1989; Nation, 1988; Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988). This instruction included the suitable methods for handling phoned-in threats, the district's policies for answering media inquiries or other crisis-generated calls, and the legal implications concerning confidentiality.

There was disagreement among authors as to whether students should be trained to perform as peer counselors during a crisis. Osborne (1985) recommended the implementation of a "peer support program" which includes a youth-staffed hot-line and using peer facilitators for helping groups of troubled friends. Hunt (1986) suggested that after a crisis has occurred, peer counselors are assembled and helped by knowledgeable adults to deal with their own reactions. The peer counselors are also presented with guidelines for assisting other students or for referring them to the counseling center. The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (1988) does not condone the use of students as counselors. They maintained that "some schools with established peer counseling programs have experimented with using peer counselors as group leaders. . . . They rarely have either the objectivity or the interpersonal skills to handle emotionally charged issues. However, because of their peer counseling training, they function well as group members" (p. 16). They also contended that it was more reassuring to students to know that there were adults available who cared.

Parents need to be informed about crisis intervention policies. Vidal (1989) suggested using a newsletter to report to parents how the school is prepared to deal with tragic events. Serafin (1990) would also include the school district's reasons for maintaining a crisis management plan and the way parents may contact the crisis team.

If a crisis occurs it was recommended that the school hold an evening meeting especially for parents. During the meeting they would learn what the school is doing to alleviate the trauma

associated with the crisis. In addition, parents would be given information about the grief cycle, briefed about the types of reactions they might expect from their children, and given some suggestions for helping their children and perhaps themselves cope with a difficult time (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988).

Education was imperative for utilizing a successful crisis management plan. It was found that most school personnel do not possess suitable training for dealing with tragic situations, and because of this, are often reluctant to become involved. The crisis team required special instruction concerning the grief process, crisis intervention techniques, and the execution of the crisis plan. Teachers also needed to understand how tragedy affects people and what is expected of them when disaster strikes. There was some debate as to whether students should be used as peer counselors. Two authors suggested that students could adequately be trained to help their friends, while a third suggested that youngsters may not be emotionally mature enough to handle such responsibility. Finally, parents should be notified that the district has a crisis management plan in effect and how they may contact the crisis team. If a tragedy occurred, a parent meeting might help to assuage parent concerns and give them some guidelines for assisting their children.

Notification Procedures

The procedures outlined in this section are applicable for situations where there is time to systematically notify the crisis team, the school personnel, and the students that are impacted by the crisis. Such situations might include a student's death, a teacher's death, or an accident that caused serious injuries to either a student or faculty member. Emergencies that must be dealt with instantly, like an armed intruder will be considered in the "Violent Events at School" section of this paper.

The crisis management plan ought to have specified who is responsible for declaring a situation a "crisis." This person was responsible for verifying as many facts as possible before

contacting the crisis team (Jay, 1989). When feasible, the incident must be officially confirmed by the police, hospital, or coroner rather than acting on information provided by school staff members or students (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988).

Activating the crisis team.

When it has been certified that a tragedy has occurred, and it is determined that a sizable population in the school will be affected, the crisis team is notified. Jay (1989) suggested that the principal constantly carry a wallet-sized card with the day and night-time telephone numbers of the crisis team. She also maintained that the superintendent should be contacted and kept informed from the beginning.

Most authors (e.g. Hunt, 1987; Nation, 1988; Sorensen, 1989) recommended that the crisis team assemble and discuss how they will apply the crisis plan to the particular situation. The purpose of the initial crisis team meeting is to (a) review the facts of the incident, (b) assign specific tasks, and (c) develop an agenda for the first day of classes following the tragedy (Hunt, 1987; Nation, 1988).

There were a variety of duties designated to crisis team members. Ruof et al. (1987) stated that, if possible, team members should arrange for substitutes so they were available to help students or to cover classes for teachers who were especially upset. It was also suggested by Osborne (1985) that someone from the crisis team contact the local mental health center to request additional counseling support. She also advised that designated team members meet with the family of the victim(s) to offer condolences, to assure confidentiality, and to address how the school plans to deal with the media. If the crisis involved a student, it would also be desirable for a member of the team to notify the principals of the schools attended by that student's siblings (Serafin, 1990; Vidal, 1989).

Serafin (1990) recommended that the crisis team attempt to keep the agenda at school as normal as possible, but noted that some activities may have to be rescheduled. She also observed that

the team may need to adjust the school's attendance policy during the crisis and, if necessary, procedures for allowing students and staff to attend funeral services must be established and communicated.

Informing the school faculty and staff.

"If possible, tell teachers . . . about the crisis before talking to anyone outside the schools. They will appreciate the courtesy, and [there will be] a well-informed representative [in] every classroom" (Kelly et al., 1989, p. 23). Hunt (1987) and Ruof et al. (1987) also commented that by letting teachers know about the incident in advance, they will have some time to adjust to the situation and won't arrive at school emotionally unprepared.

Several references (e.g. Osborne, 1985; Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Sorensen, 1989) proposed a chain call to faculty and staff to apprise them of the situation and to request their attendance at a special meeting to be held before school. Fink (1985) pointed out that if the notification procedures included this style of communication, there must be a plan to cover any of the links that are missing.

The purpose of the early morning staff meeting was to give an update of the situation and to distribute the schedule for the day; which had previously been developed by the crisis team. It was also recommended that an expert in crisis intervention describe to school personnel how the students might react to the tragedy and provide the staff with some strategies for helping students who are distraught (Dempsy, 1986). These suggestions were expanded upon by Ruof et al. (1987). They encouraged the crisis team to be sensitive and aware of any faculty member who was having a difficult time coping with the incident. They also endorsed giving teachers a list of items and activities to be used during first hour classes and urged anyone who was feeling uncomfortable in leading those exercises to request that a crisis team member also be present. This list included the initial announcement of the tragedy, procedures for students to seek counseling, and discussion questions designed to help students express their feelings. In addition, they felt it was important to

acquaint the staff with the procedures for making confidential student referrals to the counseling center. Osborne (1985) also noted that it was necessary at this time to inform all school personnel who has been assigned as the media spokesperson for the crisis, and to instruct them to redirect all inquiries and comments to that individual.

Reporting the crisis to students.

Several authors realized the importance of identifying the students who would be most upset by the tragedy and stressed that, out of respect for their feelings, those students should be informed prior to giving the news to the entire student body (Osborne, 1985; Wall & Viers, 1985). It was suggested that this be done by contacting the parents of those students and asking them to relate the situation to their children. Suggestions were also given to parents about how they might offer support at home. If calling the parents was not feasible, then a counselor or crisis team member would meet with those students privately before school (Ruof et al., 1987).

The student population needs to be told about the crisis. Wall and Viers (1985) listed four issues to consider before sharing disturbing information with students. They were (a) when the announcement should be made, (b) the manner in which the announcement would be made, (c) the content of the announcement, and (d) the students' responses to learning about the incident.

A "prompt and open announcement of a tragedy appears to add credibility to efforts by school officials to intervene" (Wall & Viers, 1985, p. 104). This statement was based upon their experience in dealing with the suicide of a teacher. The suicide occurred on Friday, but the school administration elected to wait until Monday to tell the students. Their rationale for waiting was that the students would cope with the situation better if they individually heard about the suicide during the weekend, and that this would also give them some time to recover. Instead, the students returned to school on Monday feeling angry and distrustful because the school had delayed in providing them with such information. The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (1988) also maintained that

students became bitter when they felt that important facts were being withheld. In addition, they asserted that to postpone giving students information only caused more rumors to spread.

Most authors indicated that the method used to notify students was of critical importance - especially in the case of a student suicide. With the exception of the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (1988), sources (e.g. Harper, 1989; Kelly et al., 1989; Serafin, 1990; Vidal, 1989) strongly advised against making an announcement over the school's public address system.

> The loudspeaker system is impersonal, and ought not to be used in crisis situations unless it is necessary for safety considerations. Use of the public address system increases the likelihood that no one will have prepared the school faculty for the announcement beforehand, . . . and thus minimizes the likelihood that the faculty will be able to help exert a positive influence on student reactions by way of example. (Clark as cited in Harper, 1989, p. 22)

Vidal (1989) insisted that in the case of a student suicide, a school-wide announcement may serve to glorify the act and could encourage others to attempt suicide. He also noted that this was an insensitive method of informing teachers and other acquaintances of the deceased about the tragedy, and could invite panic and hysteria among the students. In addition, many teachers and students are accustomed to disregarding the public address system. Announcing something so consequential might result in chaos rather than insight (Kelly et al., 1989).

The use of assemblies to relay unfortunate information was also discouraged by most authors; primarily for the same reasons they rejected the use of the school's intercom (Vidal, 1989). "When you give shocking news to a large group of students, the results are unpredictable" (Kelly et al., 1989, p. 23). The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (1988) also recognized that student's reactions may get out of control at an assembly. In addition, they realized that students will have questions, but because of the size of the group, they won't receive answers. The only source that suggested using an assembly to give students this kind of information was Hunt (1987), but she also approved using small groups as another option.

The preferred method for informing students about a tragic situation seemed to be through individual classes. It was suggested that a written statement be specifically prepared for the students and read to all classes (Kelly et al., 1989; Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988) . They

emphasized the importance of providing all students with the same, accurate information at the same time. If some students had received news that others had not, this could result in turmoil when the students compare what they know during the next passing period. Other advantages of using small groups for disseminating information were that the environment was more conducive for students to share their feelings and they could also receive answers to their questions (Vidal, 1989).

The content of the student announcement should focus on the verified facts of the incident. If applicable, it was also recommended that students be informed about funeral services or reassured that they will be notified once arrangements are made (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Ruof et al., 1987). It was also suggested that students are made aware of the counseling services that are being offered and the procedures to follow for obtaining help (Hunt, 1987; Ruof et al., 1987).

The students' reactions to hearing a tragic announcement will be varied. Each time a new class convenes the students will "need the catharsis of talking as a group to come to terms with their shock and grief" (Hunt, 1987, p. 37). It was advised by Hunt (1987) and Ruof et al. (1987) that teachers allow some time at the beginning of each period for this process to occur, but to try and return to a more normal routine as soon as possible. Finally, as was previously mentioned, the method chosen to notify students about the incident can assist in keeping confusion to a minimum and encourage student's responses to be less hysterical.

Working with the news media.

> A crisis is an event that is likely to draw the media's attention and scrutiny [and can] jeopardize the school's positive image in the community (Fink, cited in Jay, 1989, p. 14).

A vital component of every crisis management plan was a strategy for dealing with the news media. These procedures should be established early during the design stage of the management plan

(Fink, 1986). Many worthwhile suggestions were offered, but Ring (cited in Osborne, 1985) furnished some of the most comprehensive and practical guidelines for handling reporters (see Appendix D).

Most sources claimed that the best way to handle the publicity generated by a tragedy was to designate a spokesperson (e.g. Hunt, 1987; Jay, 1989; Nation, 1988). Surprisingly this position was not automatically assigned to the superintendent or the principal. It was observed by Fink (1986) and Kelly et al. (1989) that, during a crisis, large companies seldom use their chief executives to explain the firm's status to the media. This was because corporations are fully aware that it requires a talented individual specifically trained to take charge and maintain their composure while being cross-examined by reporters. Likewise, school districts were encouraged to carefully choose their media liaison and were urged to enlist a person with the skills and training necessary to represent the school well (Kelly et al., 1989; Nation, 1988). Nation also acknowledged that the school's administrators would be involved in managing the situation and may not be accessible for fielding media inquiries.

It was imperative that the school secretaries, faculty, and reporters were adequately informed about the district's policies for dealing with questions from the public or press (Fink, 1986; Nation, 1988). In most cases, inquiries were directed to the designated spokesperson (Dempsey, 1986; Ruof et al, 1987). It must also be determined whether or not reporters will be allowed on campus (Hunt, 1987). Ring (cited in Osborne, 1985) advised that the media be denied access to school grounds because it would cause further disruption of the students. Harper (1989) and Kelly et al. (1989) recommended that the school identify a location where news conferences can be held and where reporters can work.

A positive, working relationship with the local press prior to the crisis was considered an asset for a school district dealing with disaster because reporters may be more inclined to work in conjunction with the school if a good rapport had already been established (Kelly et al., 1989). All sources that gave recommendations for dealing with the media stressed that cooperation was essential (e.g. Jay, 1989; Kelly et al., 1989; North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988).

A school system's "lack of cooperation isn't going to have any impact on whether or not the story is covered. Where [a district] can impact is how it's covered, e.g., in a sensational or factual manner" (Ring, cited in Osborne, 1985, p. 40). Bearing in mind that reporters have a job to do and that the public has a right and a need to know what has happened, Harper (1989) deemed it most effective to supply reporters with as many verified facts as possible and as promptly as possible.

The preferred method for dealing with the media was by reading prepared press releases (e.g. North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988; Sorensen, 1989). If the district maintained and upheld a policy that all media receives the same information at the same time, school personnel can sometimes avoid being badgered by reporters who are attempting to "scoop" their competition (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988). Harper (1989) suggested that the spokesperson keep statements factual and brief. This was not an appropriate time for bluffing, ad-libbing, giving personal opinions, or speaking "off the record." Comments to reporters should be restricted to such general information as stating the victim's school activities or responsibilities, relating what is being done to help students and staff cope with the situation, and expressing the condolences of the school community (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Vidal, 1989). Vidal cautioned that the manner in which personal information is treated is definitely a confidentiality issue. He stated that the school should not disclose any personal information and that accessibility to personal files must be carefully monitored.

"Communications is one of the most critical problems administrators face in an emergency. In a tense situation, rumors multiply quickly and have the potential to panic students and the public" (Harper, 1989). The procedures used to notify the crisis team, staff, students, and the media are perhaps some of the most important decisions that must be incorporated into a crisis management plan. It has been shown that to reduce the likelihood that a tragic incident will get out of control, accurate information must be relayed promptly and in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of all concerned. This approach fostered an environment where everyone worked together to resolve the situation and hasten the return to normalcy.

Dealing with Violent Events At School

> There is a random mix of maniacs and guns in this world, and it is only a spin of the wheel before they show up at your school (Muir as cited in Jennings, 1989).

In recent years, schools have had to deal with children taken hostage, bombs exploding, students killing teachers and each other, and armed intruders shooting at youngsters on the playground (Jennings, 1989). The variety of violent or traumatic incidents that may occur at any school made it impossible to rehearse for each type, except in a very general way (Lowe, 1987). School districts confronted by such incidents have responded by implementing new security policies and by formulating crisis management plans with special contingencies for dealing with this type of catastrophe (Jennings, 1989).

Schools have instituted additional security measures such as hiring security guards, utilizing parent volunteers to monitor hallways for strangers, automatically expelling students caught with weapons in school, and locking all but the front entrance. Districts have also hired full-time nurses at each school because it was demonstrated that their medical training saved lives during such ordeals (Jennings, 1989).

Crisis management plans can include procedures and recommend equipment that could help minimize the damage to life and property during a violent incident. It was suggested that an audible code signal be devised to alert the school community about various crises (Collison et al, 1987). The North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction (1988, p. 5) offered this signal system:

1) An audible signal indicates there is a crisis.

2) This signal is followed by one of the following code letters, and if appropriate the location of the crisis.

Code A.	Hostage or attack or abuse
Code B.	Illness crisis (heart attack, severe fall)

Code C.	Suicide threat
Code D.	Evacuation of a group (tornado, gas leak)
Code E.	Social Disturbance (drugs, alcohol)
Code F.	Accident

Certain persons should be assigned to control the crowds and traffic around the school (Collison et al., 1987). Harper (1989) added that someone will need to identify who was injured or killed and then access their personal files to notify their parents or spouses. Identification of those who were injured was accomplished by writing their name on the back of their hand or by writing names on stick-on labels and applying them to clothing. It was recommended that a record of students or staff removed from the site be maintained at the school. Procedures should be established for uniting students with their parents when the area is safe once again.

Equipment that was considered vital included an intercom system hooked up to all rooms, at least one unlisted phone line for use during emergencies, a fax machine or other alternative form of communication, a cordless phone in case phone lines are inoperative, and a bullhorn for communicating with large groups of people (Harper, 1989). A list of who had keys to which buildings and an accurate floor plan of the school showing room numbers, windows, and exits was invaluable in some circumstances.

Vines (1984) noted that management problems can emerge when several agencies such as, law enforcement, fire fighters, and emergency medical services all respond to assist with the crisis. These agencies typically handled emergencies alone and were not necessarily equipped to work as a team. Collaboration with these services should be investigated when forming the crisis plan.

It was emphasized that schools and mental health agencies must work together in an attempt to alleviate violence in schools. A 15-year-old student, who shot and killed the assistant principal and wounded two others, had been treated in a mental hospital but was released when his insurance would no longer cover expenses. The school was not notified by the mental health agency that the

boy had psychological problems (Jennings, 1989). Following a similar shooting incident in their school, Collison et al. (1987) confirmed that school counselors were asked to identify potentially violent students and requests for mental health evaluations doubled in her district and in near-by communities.

Students, staff, and the community were emotionally affected by violent events, and it was found that any psychological symptoms associated with the trauma may not surface until weeks or months after the incident (Harper, 1989). These victims of violence often experienced flashbacks, depression, guilt, nightmares, anger, and a loss in self-esteem - symptoms indicative of post-traumatic stress disorder (Beadle, 1991; Jennings, 1989). These post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms were known to last for as long as two years after the crisis and their return was often prompted by anniversaries of the incident or similar tragedies that occurred in other schools. The longer that PTSD is treated, the greater the likelihood the person will fully recover (Busher as cited in Jennings, 1989; Busher as cited in Harper, 1989).

The Debriefing Process

> We are all at some level psychologically and socially vulnerable in times of physical and emotional trauma. The neglected concern for the psychosocial traumas of caregivers . . . [results] in caregivers becoming victims of the tragedy (Ogilvie, 1986, p. 1, 6-7).

It was strongly recommended that school personnel, and the crisis team in particular, meet regularly with an outside mental health consultant to process their reactions, express their feelings, and provide each other with support (e.g. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Nation, 1988; Serafin, 1990). Unfortunately, debriefing sessions were often postponed or omitted because the staff was returning to work or tending to family and personal obligations that had been put "on hold" because of the crisis (Weinberg, 1989). It was advised that debriefing occur within three days of the tragic incident (Mitchell, 1986; Osborne, 1985; Vidal, 1989). Weinberg made the unique

suggestion that a consultant or staff member be assigned to focus on the needs of the crisis team. Their duty was to watch for indications of emotional exhaustion, to listen and offer support, and to encourage the team members to take regular breaks from the action.

Mitchell (1986, p. 25) briefly defined the structure of a debriefing session, which usually takes three hours to complete:

1) An *Introduction*, in which the ground rules, such as confidentiality, are set down.

2) The *Fact Phase*, in which the situation and the aspects of the situation which made it difficult to experience are briefly reviewed with an emphasis on how these facts produce emotions.

3) The *Thought Phase*, in which the participants are able to state their first thoughts upon exposure to the worst part of the incident.

4) The *Reaction Phase*, in which participants can state their overall feeling or emotional reaction to the situation.

5) The *Symptom Phase*, in which the group can discuss the cognitive, physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms which occurred at the scene, within a few days, or weeks after the incident.

6) The *Teaching Phase*, in which the group leader provides reassurance that what members of the group are experiencing is a set of normal reactions to a bad incident and that they are not going crazy.

7) The *Re-entry Phase*, is the concluding phase, in which people get a chance to ask questions and clarify what has occurred. Referrals for additional help and helpful summary statements can then be made by the leader.

Weinberg (1989) noted that during the session, group members may disclose that they made improper statements or mistakes in their actions. Other members were typically supportive and eager to console and this was beneficial to that member's peace of mind. The debriefing session is usually summarized by concluding that crisis intervention is difficult work and that they are exceptional people for volunteering to do it.

The Evaluation Process

It was advised that the crisis management plan be reviewed on a yearly basis and changes made as needed (Serafin, 1990; Vidal, 1989). It was also suggested that an evaluation be carried out each time the crisis team was mobilized (e.g. Jay, 1989; Nation, 1988; Kelly et al., 1989). Mitchell (1986) recommended that this process should occur several weeks after the incident. He observed:

> When a critique is held in close proximity to an event, people often feel anxious and threatened. The facts are not always in and some people feel as though they are being interrogated. A supportive psychological debriefing should be done first and then the critique (p. 25).

Evaluation of the the crisis plan and its utilization was conducted by school staff, faculty, student leaders, crisis team, and the community (Kelly et al., 1989; North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988; Zinner, 1987). Kelly et al. suggested that evaluation sheets be used to score the plan itself and how effectively the team executed the plan. They also advocated interviewing people who were directly affected by the crisis. Serafin (1990) encouraged creativity in the evaluation process and suggested using interviews, observations, and reviewing the written documentation from the crisis as other methods of assessment.

The Role of the School Counselor in Crisis Intervention

Background Information

> Crisis intervention is an important dimension in any counseling office (Hannaford, 1987, p. 8).

Hannaford's statement was encouraging - but not a reality in many schools. It is often assumed that school counselors are primarily employed to assist students with emotional problems, however many are not. "Many counselors function as schedulers, disciplinarians, and college and career counselors rather than personal and crisis counselors" (Palmo et al., 1988, p. 99). Hargens (1987) investigated how the counselors in his district used their time. His study revealed that high school counselors were spending one-third of their time dealing with registration and advisement and less than 10% was devoted to personal counseling. The middle school counselors reported they were involved in lunch room and clerical duties 44% of the time and that 50% of their remaining time was used for advisement, registration, and support activities.

Weinberg (1989) asserted that school counselors were hesitant to become involved in crisis intervention because they were inexperienced and felt they had inadequate skills to deal with the situation. As a result, he noted that school districts would usually bring in outside mental health experts to provide crisis counseling after a tragedy. Weinberg conceded that these experts can be extremely valuable to an overloaded counseling department, but he argued that it discouraged the school-based counselors from administering the services themselves. Collison et al. (1987) found that the consultants were at their school after a traumatic incident were resented by the staff for not acknowledging the crisis team's abilities or efforts and for not sharing their expertise with the people who must remain and assist on a long term basis. Other sources (Hunt, 1986; Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988; Wall & Viers, 1985) recommended that outside mental health experts be utilized, but Lowe (1987) cautioned that some may have "self-serving motives."

Although the school counselor should play a key role in helping students during a crisis, Alexander and Harman (1988) alleged that existing literature has offered little to prepare counselors for this role. To become more competent it was suggested that school counselors attend formal workshops dealing with crisis intervention and grief counseling (Weinberg, 1989). Counselors must also be educated about the "kinds of situations that elicit crisis reactions, the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that become activated during a crisis, . . . and action strategies for alleviating the crisis" (Allan & Anderson, p. 149). In addition, Hannaford (1987) pointed out that it was a counselor's obligation to stay current in their field and to be responsible for their professional development.

Counselors should have taken an active role in planning and organizing their school's response to tragedy (Crabbs, 1981; Vidal, 1989). It was vital that the counselor had specific guidelines to follow which helped the counselor decide what actions will assist the students the most while causing the least amount of disruption at school (Palmo et al., 1988).

Contrary to these recommendations, the counselor's responsibilities were not well-defined in most crisis management plans. It was assumed by most sources that the school counselor would be a member of the crisis team, would receive training along with the team, and that the team would designate who was accountable for certain tasks (Ruof et al, 1987; Serafin, 1990; Sorensen, 1989). It was not always clear exactly which duties were given to the school counselor. The management plans delegated certain jobs to "a member of the crisis team" (Sorensen), to a "school mental health worker" (Crabbs, 1981), or to "the pupil personnel staff" (Hunt, 1986), terms which could refer to school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, or even the basketball coach. Perhaps these terms were intentionally general because the organizational structure of school districts varies considerably and it is not feasible to write general procedures which match the specific personnel and needs of each system (Palmo et al., 1988).

A crisis invoked a wide range of emotional reactions. These included feelings of anger, sorrow, anxiety, stress, fear, guilt, betrayal, resentment, confusion, and emptiness (Alexander & Harman, 1988; Collison, 1987). Victims found themselves preoccupied with the situation and were in an emotionally unstable condition (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1988).

In addition, a crisis will remind people of previous deaths or past ordeals and they may require assistance in dealing with their recurring grief (Sorensen, 1989).

School psychologists and other guidance personnel were responsible for restoring children, teachers, and parents to a state of equilibrium following a tragedy (Sandoval, 1988).

> Good crisis intervention, as well as good therapy of any kind, is a serious professional activity that calls for creativity and the ability to adapt to changing conditions of the therapeutic moment. . . . There are no clear-cut prescriptions or simple cause-and-effect answers" (Gilliland & James, 1988, p. viii).

Lord (1990) cited valuable information from Pynoos and Nader (1988) that detailed children's reactions to trauma at different grade levels and offered some age-appropriate strategies for helping them (see Appendix E). The grieving process was considered fundamental to the well-being of students and teachers and with adequate help most of these people would successfully cope with the incident (Dempsey, 1986; Serafin, 1990).

Providing Assistance to Students

People in crisis experienced a variety of emotional reactions and employed an assortment of coping mechanisms (Sandoval, 1988). Ruof et al. (1987, p. 62) recommended that "several different kinds of school space be made available for different student needs. These might include: a quiet space (like a library) to be alone and think, a place to talk informally (like the cafeteria) and a place to be physically active (like the gym)".

In elementary schools, many crisis interventions and activities were conducted in the individual classes most affected by the tragedy. Small group and individual counseling was also used to help students who were particularly upset (Alexander & Harman, 1988; Zinner, 1987). Zinner made an noteworthy observation about this approach. When she focused on a specific class during her intervention, she inadvertently excluded those individuals who were perhaps less upset,

but still needed the catharsis of group mourning. These people were angry because they were not included in the tree planting ceremony and other memorial activities. Zinner concluded that the entire school was disturbed by a tragic event, and that their needs must also be acknowledged.

At the secondary level, many crisis management plans proposed setting up counseling centers in the guidance office (e.g. Dempsey, 1986; Osborne, 1985; Wall & Viers, 1985). Collison et al. (1987) stressed that the center must be prepared to handle a large influx of students and that staff schedules may need to be adjusted so that someone is always available to help students. Because of this, many sources recommended the use of outside consultants from local mental health agencies or bringing in counselors and crisis team members from other schools (e.g. Hunt, 1986; Vidal, 1989).

Individual and small group counseling was offered to students. It was recognized that most adolescents preferred discussing there feelings among groups of peers (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988). Group counseling must be offered as a service to students after the initial shock of the crisis has subsided because grief work takes time (Dempsey, 1986; Lord, 1990; Vidal, 1989).

The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation (1988) provided several suggestions for dealing with group dynamics during a crisis. It was recommended that student groups meet in separate rooms and were facilitated by one or two adult leaders. They advised against letting students meet in groups by themselves or allowing students to wander in and out of various existing groups. It was noted that tensions often arise when certain group members are not considered as involved in the crisis as others. Some group members may make such accusations as "they could not possibly feel what we feel." It was imperative that this be dealt with immediately by explaining that no one's feelings are less important.

Counselors were advised to check-up on students who have not come into the counseling center but were known to be a close friend of the victim, and on students who have recently experienced the death of a family member or friend. Students already participating in groups were helpful in identifying other classmates who were distraught, but had not requested counseling (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988).

Vidal (1989) advised that the counseling center keep an accurate record of the students wanting help so their names would be available if further referral was necessary. If any students were extremely upset their parents needed to be notified. This would preferably be handled by the clinical staff who could explain why there is concern about the students' reactions and offer the parents some suggestions for helping their son/daughter. Serafin (1990) suggested that a specific assessment tool be used to identify students who were a "high risk" candidate for suicide. After a completed suicide, it was especially critical that the parents of identified high risk students be notified because there was the risk that the suicide would be imitated. When these parents were contacted, the school would recommend that they obtain a professional psychological evaluation for their child and a complete list of referral sources should also be offered (Hunt, 1986). Parents would also be informed that under the circumstances the school could not assume responsibility for their youngster's safety (Dempsey, 1986). Palmo et al. (1988) asserted that the school should also notify the parents of high risk students by letter in order to document the school's suggestion for additional mental health services. They also stated that sometimes the school district may have to insist that a student receive treatment over the objections of their parents.

Consulting with Teachers

Teachers also experienced a variety of emotional responses to tragic situations. Ruof et al. (1987) suggested scheduling staff meetings after school to give teachers and other school personnel an opportunity to express their feelings and provide support for each other.

A school counselor must be sensitive to the teacher's reactions, but they should primarily be focused on assisting teachers in helping their students cope with the incident. If, as recommended, the staff has been educated about children's reactions to crisis and inserviced about their role in the crisis management plan they will be better prepared to help students (Serafin, 1990).

The school psychologist or counselor briefed teachers on the feelings and behaviors students might exhibit and how these might affect their learning. They also offered suggestions to help

teachers assist students in dealing with the tragedy (Allan & Anderson, 1986; Dempsey, 1986). The most common behavior changes demonstrated by traumatized students were unexpected aggression or withdrawal (Harper, 1989; Lord, 1990). Teachers were asked to be alert for youngsters who were especially upset, depressed, or unusually quiet and to report those students' names to the counseling center (Hunt, 1986; Ruof et al. 1987).

Teachers were encouraged to allow time for class discussion when students were informed about the tragedy. Ideally, there were enough crisis team members to assist in each classroom, otherwise teachers were urged to request that one be present if they were uncomfortable leading the discussion themselves (Collison et al, 1987; Ruof et al., 1987). It was recommended that the teachers talk about how it is okay to feel upset by the situation, inform students about the counseling center, teach students about the grief process, and answer questions about death and funerals in general (Ruof et al., 1987). During the discussion, Hunt (1986) would have encouraged students to share their feelings about the incident with their parents. Crabbs (1981) suggested that counselors could also provide materials and activities for teachers to use, such as unfinished sentences or allowing students to express their feelings through artwork. Because "processing is by far the most important phase in using exercises" (Jacobs, 1988, p. 191) these types of activities may need to be reserved for the more experienced group facilitator.

Miscellaneous Responsibilities

After a student or teacher death, a counselor and an administrator were assigned the duty of cleaning out the deceased's locker or desk and collecting their personal belongings. If a suicide note or a weapon was found, it must be turned over to the police (Ruof et al., 1987).

It was also the responsibility of administrators and counselors to officially withdraw a deceased student's name from the enrollment file to avoid the possibility that the school would later mail something to the child's home. Personal records were collected and secured by the principal (Hunt, 1986; Vidal, 1989).

The guidance counselor, accompanied by the principal, contacted the victim's family at home to offer support and return personal items. If appropriate, it might be suggested that the family consider holding funeral services after school so more people could attend (Ruof et al., 1987). Vidal (1989) noted that some parents will request that the funeral be held at school which he advised against. In the case of a suicide, it may only serve to glorify the incident and could incite others to make an attempt. There was also the risk that the fellow classmates did not know or care about the deceased, and a small number of students attending the funeral could only embarrass and add to the family's sorrow.

It was recommended that an appropriate gesture, such as planting a tree, be used to signal the end of the official mourning period and that it was time to return to normal operations (Hunt, 1986; Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1988). "A fitting response shifts the immediate focus from the pain felt to the actions taken. Group rituals in response to crisis tend to be long and positively remembered" (Zinner, 1987, p. 500).

Counselors may be expected to coordinate or facilitate meetings and seminars related to the crisis. In the case of a student suicide, Vidal (1989) suggested bringing in experts to conduct a symposium on youth suicide for students, school personnel, and parents. Serafin (1990) recommended that the school provide a parent and community debriefing as a postvention activity. After a particularly tragic shooting incident, a school offered several weekly meetings for parents. During these evening sessions, parents were given information about their children's and their own emotional reactions to the violence, taught about stress management, and received support from the school staff and each other (Harper, 1989; Lowe, 1987).

School counselors were in a unique position to intervene during tragic situations because of their professional training and because they were already familiar with the students and staff (Zinner, 1987). Many counselors felt unprepared to deal with the demands of a crisis situation because they mainly function as clerics or career advisors. Major corporations have used crisis management techniques for quite some time but it is a relatively new undertaking for education and many counselors received their training prior to its emergence (Palmo, et al, 1988). It seemed school

counselors had a choice: they could either enhance their training in grief counseling and crisis intervention or they could rely on outside consultants to handle the situation. With proper training, counselors were valuable members of their school crisis team and were instrumental in drafting a crisis management plan that could help most students fully recover from the emotional setbacks caused by tragedy.

Summary

No school system was immune to tragedy, but districts had a choice about how they would deal with crisis situations. They could improvise and risk the possibility that poorly made decisions would damage their reputation within the community. Potential lawsuits were another concern because schools were charged to act "in place of the parent" and, by law, must act in a prudent and reasonable manner - even during a crisis. The alternative was to plan ahead. Traumatic events prevented staff and students from focusing on learning because their emotional needs took precedence over the subject matter, but many schools still did not perceive there was a need for a crisis management plan.

Districts which have instituted crisis plans usually began by forming a crisis response team. This team was comprised of people from central administration, individual schools, and the community. Their responsibility was to formulate a crisis plan, ensure that people were trained to deploy the plan, and oversee that the plan was maintained through an annual staff inservice and continued interaction with community agencies.

The crisis management plan provided specific procedures to assist in responsible decision making during a traumatic time. It also needed to be flexible because each tragic circumstance will have unique features that must be considered. Most plans offered guidelines for informing the school community about the tragedy, working with the media, assisting people with their emotional

needs, debriefing and evaluation. Some plans focused specifically on student suicide or surviving violent events that occurred at school.

It was assumed that the school counselor would be a member of the crisis team and assist in drawing up a crisis plan that addressed the psychosocial needs of school populations. During the actual crisis, the counselor concentrated on helping students by offering counseling services, consulting with their teachers, and providing suggestions to their parents.

Crisis intervention was challenging work, and students and staff emerged stronger for having coped with and recovered from a traumatic experience. A crisis is an opportunity for growth.

CHAPTER THREE

I have investigated substantial literature pertaining to crisis teams, crisis management plans, and the counselor's role in crisis intervention. I have also been a secondary teacher for 13 years and worked in three different school districts so I am familiar with school dynamics and operations. I will now offer some observations and suggestions pertaining to the literature I have reviewed and based upon my personal experience.

1) *More research is needed to determine which crisis intervention procedures are effective.*

Many crisis managements plans were presented this way: "Here's what we did in our school during an emergency. It worked for us and it should work for you." Some school districts did combine what they assumed to be the best components of several previously established plans. The key word here is "assumed." To my knowledge, no one has undertaken the task of thoroughly researching which procedures consistently provided the desired recovery outcomes. Granted, tragedy is a difficult area to study because every situation is unique and it is neither feasible nor ethical to subject people to trauma for the purpose of research. However, there have been and unfortunately will continue to be a sufficient number of school crises that could be used for analytical purposes. Longitudinal data could be gathered through interviews and reviews of crisis documentation. Immediately following a disaster, interviews and observations could be carried out at the site. Crisis intervention could be improved if schools knew which techniques were most effective for promoting recovery.

2) *The crisis management plan should be applicable to a variety of tragic incidents.*

I cannot support the plans that are specifically targeted at suicide. If these are the only set of guidelines a district has in place, they might find themselves floundering when faced with an incident such an armed intruder or a natural disaster. I acknowledge that suicide is a more common occurrence than these, and unlike fatal accidents there is a contagion factor to be concerned about.

Because there is evidence that suicides are imitated, I would encourage schools to have a section in their crisis plans devoted to the special considerations involved in handling a suicide. I still maintain that schools have to prepare themselves for other crises as well.

3) *The crisis plan should have responsibilities designated to specific people so it can be executed without delay.*

There are certain duties that must be performed, despite the type of crisis being dealt with. People should be specifically assigned by name or position to fill these roles. Some examples of these kinds of responsibilities are managing the phones, calling central administration, documenting the school's actions, calling the appropriate community agencies, and preparing statements or hand-outs for staff and students. If these and other procedures are previously delegated, it allows the crisis team to concentrate on the details of a particular incident such as, which agencies to call, which information sheets to photocopy, and composing the statement that will be shared with students. Vidal (1989) was the only author to provide a plan that specifically designated who was responsible for each procedure and I contend that this would aid in carrying out the plan more quickly.

4) *Documentation and record keeping forms need to be developed and published.*

In addition to taking care of the emotional needs of its students and staff, a crisis plan was recommended to protect schools from potential lawsuits. If a school reacts appropriately in a crisis and has accurate, detailed documentation they should have a stronger case if they are taken to court. The literature recommended that the crisis team maintain a log of actions, events, and phone calls but was not explicit about what was important legally. I found forms available for assessing the lethality of a student's suicide threat, but very little in the way of outlining and reporting a crisis as it transpires. I would encourage school districts to use their attorney's expertise and advice in drafting forms that would assist the crisis teams in recording their actions. These forms should be easy to complete and in accordance with the current legislation related to school liability.

5) *Schools must train and utilize their staff more effectively.*

This recommendation is based mostly on personal experience. I have never worked in a school that informed me about what I was expected to do if there was a crisis. I suspect that most school personnel have not been exposed to crisis management either. I think most staff members would agree to help in some way during a disaster if they had adequate training to feel confident about what they were doing. Educating school personnel about the behaviors associated with high risk students and how to lead a discussion on the grief cycle or death could greatly impact the recovery process after a major catastrophe. Every staff member could be assigned a task to perform during a crisis or act as a designated substitute. Once training has been completed and various roles assigned, a mock-crisis is an excellent method of finding the weak points in the crisis plan and for reinforcing what the staff has learned. When a school is confronted by an actual crisis, providing previously prepared worksheets to staff would review what has been practiced and reassure them that they can do it competently. While some of the literature promoted this kind of intensive training, most schools are not educating the majority of their staff to assist during tragic events.

6) *Peer counselors should not lead group discussions during the aftermath of a crisis.*

I agree with the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation that few students are mature enough emotionally and have the skills necessary to conduct groups dealing with students' reactions to a tragic event. There may also be some legal problems associated with students facilitating groups in these circumstances. If a peer counselor was leading a group formed to assist students with their feelings about a recent suicide and later a group member committed suicide, the peer counselor would probably be devastated. Could the school be held liable for the second suicide and the emotional trauma experienced by the peer counselor?

Student counselors can be valuable, however, because students are often more receptive to their peers than to adults. Because there is usually a large number of students who seek counseling help after a major tragedy, peer counselors might be trained to provide reassurance to students who are waiting to see an adult counselor or to be assigned to a small group. A peer counselor and an

adult leader could be co-facilitators of small groups. Especially during the aftermath of a crisis, a student counselor could share with the group how they have reacted to and coped with the tragic situation.

Peer counselors should not serve as group leaders during such emotionally stressful incidents. They can be effectively used as group members, as co-facilitators with an adult, or to offer support while students are waiting in the counseling center.

7) *The suggested methods of notifying people about the tragedy need to be improved or revised.*

Most every source recommended using a chain call to notify school personnel about the tragedy and to request they attend an early morning meeting. My experience with this form of communication backs-up Fink's warning that there needs to be a contingency plan in place because there will always be those who can't be contacted. I wish I could offer a better alternative than a phone tree, but I can encourage that the calling sequence be as simple as possible.

My second concern is using an audible signal to inform the entire school that there is an emergency. Most students and staff have been trained that emergency buzzers are a signal to exit the building - not the desired result when there is a tornado or stranger with a gun is wandering the halls. If the emergency buzzer was followed by a code letter, teachers would have to search for the memo they received three months ago that stated what "Code C" referred to. In the meantime, the students would become agitated because they know something exciting is going on and it will be more difficult for a teacher to maintain calmness and regain order. Perhaps the school could invest in pagers for all crisis team members. They could be summoned and then deliver written messages to each classroom stating the type of crisis and giving instructions to follow. If the nature of the incident does not lend itself to this approach, then an announcement over the intercom would be preferred over a series of bells and code letters.

8) *Every school building should have a spokesperson who is trained to work with the media.*

The literature emphasized that the media spokesperson should receive special training for dealing with reporters. I would like to suggest that unless the district is quite small, every building should have a media liaison rather than one person to cover the entire district. A spokesperson assigned to each school would be in a better position to promote the unique and positive activities of their school. As was cited by several sources, a good reputation in the community prior to a disaster is an asset worth cultivating. If there should be a crisis, someone is already on site to immediately begin preparing press releases and handling the reporters. When faculty and staff were contacted by reporters they would automatically know who was handling inquiries. A building spokesperson would also be more familiar with the school's programs, crisis plan, personnel, and students and could relay information more quickly and accurately.

9) *The media should be denied access to the school building during a crisis.*

Reporters present in the building would certainly distract students and may encourage inappropriate or hysterical responses because some youngsters would intentionally act out if they thought it would get them on T.V. or in the newspaper. Staff members might be less inclined to assist with certain intervention activities during a disaster if they thought they were being scrutinized or evaluated by the media.

10) *School districts could easily be better prepared for dealing with emergency or violent situations.*

There is equipment that could easily be assembled and kept in a convenient place that is critical for managing certain kinds of emergencies. A cordless phone, a bullhorn, accurate floor plans, and stick on labels, are a few of the items mentioned in the literature.

Schools already hold fire drills, but I am suggesting that they need to be taken more seriously to be useful in an actual emergency. When there is a fire drill, classes are usually not

expected to exit together or to meet at a certain campus location. Teachers do not usually carry their class rosters with them and time is not provided for them to make sure every student in their class is accounted for.

11) *Evaluation procedures and accompanying forms need to be developed.*

There was minimal information found in the literature concerning the evaluation process to be performed after a crisis. Most sources agreed that a critique should be done each time the crisis team was activated. Interviewing people involved with the crisis, completing evaluation forms, and reviewing documentation were mentioned as tools for evaluation. None of the literature offered sample evaluation forms. Once the crisis is over, people must resume their normal duties and it's possible that the evaluation process is usually not completed. Crisis teams may be more inclined to include this process if there were some guidelines to follow or some sample evaluation forms they could use as models.

12) *All school counselors should participate in assisting students during a crisis.*

School counselors should be active members of the crisis team and should be involved in establishing a crisis plan that includes provisions for helping the students in crisis. Crisis intervention and grief therapy may not be required courses for a counseling endorsement, but school counselors should obtain this additional training so they are prepared to help youngsters after a traumatic event. The work is demanding and sometimes frightening, but during a full-blown crisis, students will need all the counselors the school can muster. It would not be appropriate for a counselor who is mainly involved with college and career advising to decline to intervene when there is a school catastrophe. School counselors will have be aware of their limitations and sometimes it may be best to refer some situations to another school counselor or a school psychologist. Because of their interpersonal skills and their familiarity with the students, all school counselors need to be involved in crisis intervention, but at a level that is comfortable for them.

13) School personnel who are expected to lead classroom discussions immediately following a crisis should receive training in group facilitation skills.

Teachers, counselors, and crisis team members must be skilled in group facilitation techniques to ensure that classroom discussions will be beneficial to students. Jacobs (1988) maintained that it was essential for a group facilitator to have a purpose to accomplish during a group session and possess the skills necessary to focus the group in that direction. This purpose might be to share knowledge and opinions, to discuss the situation, or to explore feelings, but whatever the desired outcome it must be defined prior to a crisis. Group leaders must be able to handle a variety of personalities and situations and will also need to acquire such skills as active listening, reflecting feelings, clarification and questioning, and cutting off and drawing out techniques (Jacobs, 1988). If exercises are to be used as part of the discussion, adequate processing of these activities is necessary for achieving the purpose. Leading an effective group requires planning, practice, and a knowledge of group dynamics. Therefore, I strongly suggest that those individuals who are expected to lead classroom discussions following a crisis receive enhanced instruction in group facilitation techniques.

Appendix A

PREVENTION

Programs and Services

CRISIS TYPE	RESOURCE	NATURE OF SERVICE	HOW TO ACCESS	COST
Suicide attempt/ other medical crisis	American Assoc. of Suicidology	Clearing house, referrals, education, information research	Call or write: 2459 S. Ash Denver, CO 80222 (303) 692-0985	None
Natural Disaster	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U. S. Dept.	Weather warnings, reporting, and protection procedures; printed materials for students and adults; listings of radio weather stations	For printed material Superintendent of Document, U. S. Gov't Printing Office, Wash., DC 20402	Varies
Environmental crises (nuclear accident, chemical leaks)	Emergency Management Office	Education, planning, emergency procedures	See local directory under city/county government	None
	American Red Cross	First Aid Training	See local directory	None
General	School counselors, psychologists, and social workers, nurses	Developmental counseling consultation, referrals, and training	See directory for local school	None
	Information & Referral Directory	Referral service and description of agencies	County United Way Agency	Nominal for annual updates
	Local Public Library	Information	See local directory	None

INTERVENTION

Programs and Services

CRISIS TYPE	RESOURCE	NATURE OF SERVICE	HOW TO ACCESS	COST
Natural Disasters	Salvation Army	Shelter, food, clothes	Local directory	None
	American Red Cross	Food, shelter, clothes, medical care	Local directory	None
	Local Churches, Civic Clubs	Food, clothes, etc.	Local directory	None
	YM/YWCA	Temporary shelter	Local directory	None
Acts of Violence	Law Enforcement	Crowd control, communications,	Call 911 or other emergency number(s)	None
	Battered Women's Shelter/Crisis Center	Temporary shelter, counseling	Local directory	None
	Rape Crisis Center	Counseling, guidance, legal assistance	Local directory	None
	Dept. of Social Services	Child placement services, counseling, legal assistance, child protection	Local directory	None
Substance Abuse	Local Council on Alcoholism	Treatment, counseling, referral	Local directory	None
	Alcoholics Anonymous	Support, counseling, referral	Local directory	None
	Narcotics Anonymous	Support, counseling, referral	Local directory	None
	Mental Health Center	Support, counseling, referral	Local directory	Varies
	Hospital	Detoxification, medical assistance	Local directory	Varies

Programs and Services

CRISIS TYPE	RESOURCE	NATURE OF SERVICE	HOW TO ACCESS	COST
Death	Hospice	Support, counseling	Local directory	None
	Grief Counseling Agencies (Kinder-mourn, Compassionate Friends, To Life, etc.)	Support, counseling	Local directory	Varies
	Mental Health	Counseling, therapy	Local directory	Sliding scale
	Churches, ministers	Pastoral counseling	Local directory	None
	School counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses	Counseling, consultation, referrals	Call local school	None
Family	Dept. of Social Services	Financial assistance, housing	Local directory	None
	United Way Services	Family counseling	Local directory	Varies
	Legal aid	Legal assistance	Local directory	Ability to pay
	Mental health center	Counseling, therapy	Local directory	Sliding scale
	School counselors, social workers, psychologists	Counseling, consultation, referrals	Call local school	None
	Churches, ministers	Counseling, support	Local directory	None
	Information referral directory	Information, descriptive listing of community services	Call United Way	Nominal fee for annual update
	Group homes	Emergency placement for persons in crisis	Call local mental health authority	Varies
	Tough Love	Parent support group	Local directory	None

Appendix B

INTERVENTION - dealing with the "crisis" . . .

Provide training for all staff. Prevention Component.

Provide training for community.

Determine who will gather facts and verify information.

Notify superintendent or designee regarding the "crisis."

Call emergency staff meeting to inform them of facts and to give them specific directions. (Use a phone tree to call meeting.)

Dispel rumors.

Decide who will deal with the media and how (prepare a written statement).

Identify team member to deal with family.

Contact family to inform them of need to release information. (Be sensitive to family privacy.)

Decide what space in the school is conducive to individual and group interaction as needed. (Sometimes going to the groups works best.)

Decide how the "crisis" is to be announced to students. (School intercom dealing with death is not recommended.)

Assign one person to handle all calls. (Provide them with accurate, written information.)

Reschedule activities as needed, trying to keep things as normal as possible. (We need stability in time of "crisis.")

Determine who will take care of victim's locker contents in the event of death.

Withdraw student from school enrollment in the event of death.

Identify person to notify school of siblings.

Provide supervision for all students.

Discuss attendance policy for crisis - determine how and when students will be excused from class.

Network with community agencies to clarify their roles.

Provide method to notify parents regarding "crisis" if appropriate. (Reduces rumors.)

Plan how to evaluate effectiveness of your "plan." (Be creative, such as using case studies by interview and observation techniques.)

POSTVENTION - dealing with the crisis aftermath: responding to survivors.

Assist students and staff in grieving as a result of their loss.

Involve community resources.

Assess identified "youth-at-risk" using specific assessment tool.

Make appropriate referral based on assessment.

Debrief staff after crisis. (Remember to include it in your plan.)

Provide a parent/community debriefing.

Give support to teachers in dealing with the "empty chair" (i.e. team member to follow student's schedule).

Identify areas for individual/group help to students and staff ("drop in center"). Make this known to students.

Establish timelines for follow-up.

Evaluate effectiveness of plan by simple documentation.

Identify community problems which relate to the "crisis" - be an advocate for students.

Appendix C

Action Plan

Crisis team members: Date: _____

Plan of Action:	Person Responsible:	Date Done:

Check actions taken:	Who	When	By Whom
___School administrator notified			
___Parents notified			
___Police notified			
___Social Services notified			
___Mental Health notified			
___Others (specify)			

Appendix D

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

The following suggestions on working with the media are copied with permission from J. Ring, B.S., "Teenage Suicide: Prevention, Intervention Response," in manual from Cosad and Four Winds Hospital, c1984, p. 13-16.

I've walked both sides of the communications gap during a 20-year career in the communications business. As a newspaper and radio reporter, I went after the facts. As the public relations spokesman for the public and political and private entities, I dispensed information within the context of my employer's best interests. The contrast in those roles offers the perspective upon which my recommendations are based. Several years as a secondary education classroom teacher bring an understanding of the unique problems and dilemmas of the schools in working with media.

Media policy varies from one school district to another. The primary spokesman may be the superintendent, a public information officer, a central staff member, or even the building principals. Information may be channeled exclusively through one person on a regular basis, or there may be considerable latitude regarding talking to reporters depending upon the story or issue.

Given these differences in approach, the following suggestions are intended as guidelines to follow, no matter who is doing the talking.

In order to work constructively with the media, we first need to look at some of the stereotypical biases which affect our thinking and, thus, our actions and attitude toward reporters. Journalists are plagued by a frequently held notion that they are all muckrakers, sensationalists, unscrupulous, insensitive, will spare nothing to "get the story," and can't be trusted. Of course, that is no more the universal case than it is for other professionals who are labeled with similar negative adjectives. It's a matter of some "bad apples" spoiling the bushel.

Even though personal experience may have run to the contrary on occasion, the fact is that the majority of journalists work hard under deadline pressures, try to be accurate, have a job to do, a boss to answer to, and want to be treated as decent human beings. If you accept that and are willing to believe it, you've taken the first constructive step in working with media through a school crisis.

The conflicts which can arise between reporters and the schools stem less from inherent differences than from a perceived disparity in goals. There is a common element--both have a job to accomplish. The reporter has a story to file. The school needs to carry on business with as much normalcy as possible. With some advance thinking and planning, both can be accomplished. How?

Deal up-front with reporters.

A good communication system with local media should already have been established. If you have that as a basis, working through a crisis situation is not nearly so difficult. If your present relationship with local media is wanting or needs improvement, take the first step. Invite them to the school for a special function; offer a good feature story; brief them on upcoming events; be accessible; return telephone calls promptly. In other words, be up-front, forthright, and honest, and you'll earn the respect, and even friendship, of reporters whom you can trust when crisis comes. They won't try to mess you up in a crisis if you have been a decent sort right along.

Don't try to "stonewall" the media.

Attempting to stop reporters from doing their job is how that's perceived. Nothing is so infuriating to the media, or so futile for the "stonewaller." Remember, you are not the sole source of information. Police reports are public documents; newsrooms have scanners; police checks are a twice-daily routine in most newsrooms; reporters have personal sources. Decide what is appropriate for the school or district to say and say it. Prepare and issue a statement. Express the sorrow of the faculty and student body, explain what is being done in the school to deal with the reaction to a suicide, make positive comments about the deceased student.

Another appropriate method is to hold a briefing for the media. Issue your statement, answer any questions which do not violate confidentiality, explain your ground rules for coverage of the story. If you are asked a question which is clearly inappropriate, don't get angry. I've often responded to such situations by saying, "Come on, you know I can't answer that." Most reporters will understand; some just ask to see how far they can get. In terms of ground rules, point out that you can't have the students even more disrupted by having reporters on the school grounds. Ask them to stay off, as it's private property. Explain that you don't want a confrontation with them; but if they push the issue, you'll have them removed. You can be clear without being nasty. Just spend some time explaining your position and they'll cooperate if you're reasonable.

If you get a surprise visit from a television crew or unfamiliar media, invite them into your office. Explain the ground rules about disrupting the school routine. Ask what you can do to help them. Consider anything which seems feasible; don't say "no" without thinking about it. There are many positive uses of the media, particularly in getting a prevention message across. Remember that your lack of cooperation isn't going to have any impact on whether or not the story is covered. Where you can impact is <u>how</u> it's covered, e.g., in a sensational or factual manner. If you give the media something sound to talk about, they are much less likely to be sensational. They aren't going away just because you won't talk.

And, by the way, I've talked to a number of reporters who are very sensitive about excessive media coverage of teenage suicide. They don't want to exacerbate the problem; but if that's their story assignment, they don't really have a choice. The faster they cover it, the faster they'll move on to the next story.

Identify a single information source.

Do not wait for a crisis. Do it now. Clearly, that decision rests with the chief school district administrator. Whether it is the administrator, a public information or public relations specialist, or the building principal is less important than having one consistent source where a reporter can turn for information. Obviously, the person selected should have good human relations skills, feel comfortable with the media, and be readily accessible. They need to know all the facts, determine what is appropriate to state, and return media telephone calls promptly. The media need to know exactly who to contact, so call the local media and tell them.

Advise school personnel of the media procedure.

Make certain that the faculty knows the name and phone number of the media contact person. If they are asked for official comments, they can refer the reporter to that person. On the other hand, if they are asked for personal comments about the student, it should be left to their good judgment what to say. There is no point in telling staff not to talk to reporters; trust their professionalism. Besides, what's really wrong with a teacher saying something positive about the deceased student? What would be inappropriate is any comment about the mental/emotional/psychological aspects or history. That information is contained in the confidential records in any event, and these should be removed to a secure place.

Advise students of the district's media procedure.

Tell students how the district plans to disseminate information to the media. Explain that reporters may ask them questions. Suggest that they not make any comment they wouldn't want said about themselves. If you appeal to their sensitivity, they are much more likely to use good judgment. It is useless to try to stop anyone from talking to reporters who want to, off school grounds. However, students need to understand that they don't have to talk to reporters and should feel free to say "no" if that's their inclination.

Consult with the deceased student's family.

Explain the parameters which the school district has established. Assure them that confidential information is being protected. State the exact plan for dealing with media matters so that there is no possibility of misunderstanding the school's position. Offer to help them in any way in dealing with media, even down to issuing a statement through the school.

Appendix E

Preschool through Second Grade

Response to Trauma	First Aid
1. Helplessness and passivity	1. Provide support, rest, comfort, food, opportunity to play or draw.
2. Generalized fear	2. Reestablish adult protective shield.
3. Cognitive confusion (e.g., do not understand that the danger is over)	3. Give repeated, concrete clarifications.
4. Difficulty identifying what is bothering them	4. Provide emotional labels for common reactions.
5. Lack of verbalizations - selective mutism, repetitive nonverbal traumatic play, unvoiced questions	5. Help to verbalize general feelings and complaints.
6. Attributing magical qualities to traumatic reminders	6. Separate what happened from physical reminders such as the place where the trauma occurred.
7. Sleep disturbances (night terrors and nightmares; fear of going to sleep; fear of being alone, especially at night)	7. Encourage them to let their parents know.
8. Anxious attachment (e.g.,clinging to parents)	8. Provide consistent caretaking (e.g., assurance of being picked up from school).
9. Regressive symptoms (thumb sucking, enuresis, regressive speech)	9. Tolerate regressive symptoms in a time- limited manner
10. Anxieties related to incomplete understanding about death; fantasies of "fixing up" the dead; expectations that a dead person will return	10. Give explanations about the physical reality of death.

Third through Fifth Grade

Response to Trauma	First Aid
1. Preoccupation with their own actions during the event; issues of responsibility and guilt	1. Help to express their secretive imaginings about the event.
2. Specific fears, triggered by traumatic reminders	2. Help to identify and articulate traumatic reminders and anxieties; encourage them not to generalize.
3. Retelling and replaying of the event (traumatic play)	3. Permit them to talk and act it out; address distortions, and acknowledge normality of feelings and reactions.
4. Fear of being overwhelmed by their feelings (of crying, of being angry)	4. Encourage expression of fear, anger, sadness, in your supportive presence.
5. Impaired concentration and learning	5. Encourage to let teachers know when thoughts and feelings interfere with learning.
6. Sleep disturbances (bad dreams, fear of sleeping alone)	6. Support them in reporting dreams; provide information about why we have bad dreams.
7. Concerns about their own and others' safety	7. Help to share worries; reassure with realistic information.
8. Altered and inconsistent behavior, (e.g.,unusually aggressive or reckless behavior, inhibitions)	8. Help to cope with the challenge to their own impulse control (e.g., acknowledge, "It must be hard to feel so angry").
9. Somatic complaints	9. Help identify the physical sensations they felt during the event and link when possible.
10. Hesitation to disturb parent with own anxieties	10. Offer to meet with children and parent(s), to help children let parents know how they are feeling.
11. Concern for other victims and their families	11. Encourage constructive activities on behalf of the injured or deceased.
12. Feeling disturbed, confused and frightened by their grief responses; fear of ghosts	12. Help to retain positive memories as they work through the more intrusive traumatic memories.

Adolescents (Sixth Grade and Up)

Response to Trauma	First Aid
1. Detachment, shame, and guilt	1. Encourage discussion of the event, feelings about it, and realistic expectations of what could have been done.
2. Self-consciousness about their fears, sense of vulnerability; fear of being labeled abnormal	2. Help them understand the adult nature of these feelings, encourage peer understanding and support.
3. Post-traumatic acting out behavior, (e.g., drug use, delinquent behavior, sexual acting out)	3. Help to understand the acting out behavior as an effort to numb their responses to, or to voice their anger over, the event.
4. Life threatening reenactment, self-destructive or accident-prone behavior	4. Address the impulse toward reckless behavior in the acute aftermath; link it to the challenge to impulse control associated with violence.
5. Abrupt shifts in interpersonal relationships	5. Discuss the expectable strain on relationships with family and peers.
6. Desires and plans to take revenge	6. Elicit their actual plans of revenge; address the realistic consequences of these actions; encourage constructive alternatives that lessen the traumatic sense of helplessness.
7. Radical changes in life attitudes which influence identity formation	7. Link attitude changes to the event's impact.
8. Premature entrance into adulthood (e.g., leaving school or getting married) or reluctance to leave home	8. Encourage postponing radical decisions in order to allow time to work through their responses to the event and to grieve.

Family

Pynoos and Nader also suggest how "first aid" may be administered to children in the family. These suggestions might be mailed to families or sent home with the students.

1. Give children special and directed support by keeping things fairly structured and adjusting for fears, especially at bedtime.
2. Help re-establish a sense of safety by assuring that the house is locked, and that the child knows the parents' whereabouts at all times. This may mean transporting to and from school for awhile.
3. Offer reassurance when traumatic reminders intrude thinking, feeling, or behavior.
4. Validate the expression of all feelings by tolerating them and not dismissing them.

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